

Dr. George N. Papanicolaou (1883–1962) and the Art of Modern Numismatics

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Dear Editor,

We read with great interest your editorial [1] as well as the article by Professor Chantziantoniou [2] supporting the perspective of the creation of the George N. Papanicolaou Museum in Kymi on the island of Euboea in Greece. Your support is a significant megalith in the construction of this museum, indeed. Born in Kymi on the island of Euboea, on May 13, 1883, Dr. George N. Papanicolaou is a pioneer in modern medicine and the official opening of his first dedicated museum will be a really great moment for his birthplace, cytology as well as our international medical society.

In the context of the recent 9th workshop on Paediatric Virology organized by the Institute of Paediatric Virology located on the island of Euboea (<https://paediatricvirology.gr>), we prepared an exhibition of the collection of the most well-known honorary two-dimensional images/portraits of Dr. George N. Papanicolaou depicted at modern coins and medals (Fig. 1). This collection consisted of the portraits of Dr. George N. Papanicolaou, which were created by (a) engraver Ioannis Pipinis for the 10,000 drachmas banknote of the Bank of Greece (1995), (b) sculptor George Stamatopoulos for the silver 10.00 euros commemorative coin of the Bank of Greece – Eurosystem (2012), (c) sculptor Theodoros Papagiannis for the Dr. George N. Papanicolaou medal by the Academy of Athens (1983), (d) sculptor



Fig. 1. Exhibition of honorary two-dimensional images of Dr. George N. Papanicolaou, “9th workshop on Paediatric Virology,” May 13, 2023.

Table 1. Modern Greek banknotes and coins issued by the Bank of Greece portraying Greek medical physicians honoring them for their contribution in politics or civilization or medicine

Currency	Year of issuing	Greek physician	Contribution
500.00 drachmas banknote	1945	Ioannis Kapodistrias	Founding of the modern Greek state – First governor of Greece
100.00 drachmas banknote	1978	Adamantios Korais	Modern Greek enlightenment
500.00 drachmas banknote	1983	Ioannis Kapodistrias	Founding of the modern Greek state – First governor of Greece
50.00 drachmas coin	1994	Demetrios Kallergis	Participation to the Revolution of the 3rd September 1843, which led to the foundation of the first constitution of the Hellenic Kingdom in 1844
10,000 drachmas banknote	1995	George Papanicolaou	Invention of the Pap test detecting early stages of cervical cancer
0.20 euro coin	2001	Asclepius Amphiarus Ioannis Kapodistrias	Ancient Greek God of medicine Healing of Archinus Founding of the modern Greek state – First governor of Greece
Silver 10.00 euros commemorative coin	2012	George Papanicolaou	Invention of the Pap test detecting early stages of cervical cancer
Silver 10.00 euros commemorative coin	2013	Hippocrates of Kos Amphiarus	Father of medicine Healing of Archinus
Golden 200.00 euros commemorative coin	2013	Hippocrates of Kos Amphiarus	Father of medicine Healing of Archinus

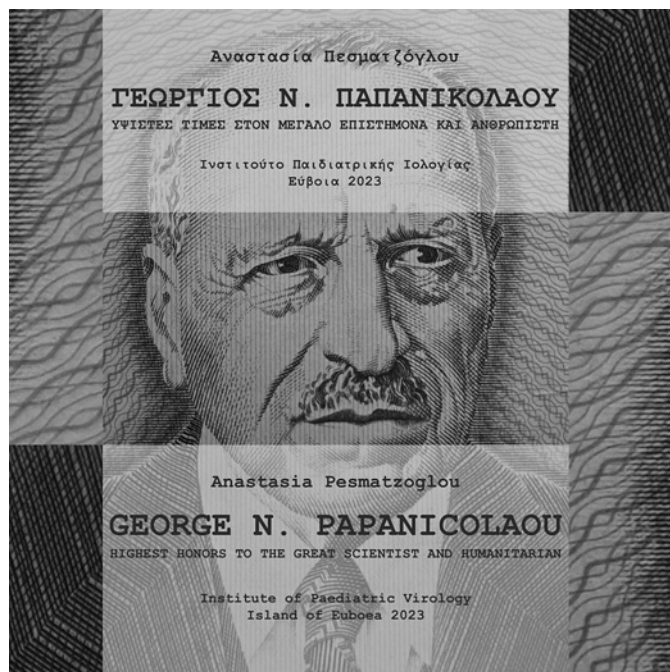


Fig. 2. Cover page of the bilingual (Greek and English) e-edition by the Institute of Paediatric Virology on Dr. George N. Papanicolaou and modern art numismatics.

Aspasia Papadoperaki for the Dr. George N. Papanicolaou medal by the European Health Club (1983), and (e) sculptor and painter Antonios Karachalios for the Dr. George N. Papanicolaou medal by the Prefectural Authority of Euboea in Greece (end of '90s). This collection can be further enriched and should definitely be included in the future George N. Papanicolaou Museum.

To date, several foundations and governmental institutions in Greece, Cyprus, Europe and the USA have honored Dr. George N. Papanicolaou, using modern art numismatics; numismatics is the science and art of currency, including the creation of banknotes, coins and medals [3]. The choice of the figures or the objects that are portrayed on a paper banknote, a metallic coin, or a medal is indicative of the era, the significance and the contribution of each honored individual [4]. During the last century, different national monetary systems have honored several medical physicians for their medical achievements and contributions to the welfare of humanity [5]. Among medical physicians, who have been portrayed in national banknotes worldwide, are Dr. Louis Pasteur in France, Dr. Paul Ehrlich in Germany, Dr. Karl Landsteiner and Dr. Sigmund Freud in Austria, and Dr. Flora Murray in Scotland and Dr. George N. Papanicolaou in Greece.

Table 1 presents all modern Greek banknotes and coins issued by the Bank of Greece portraying Greek medical physicians honoring them for their contribution to politics, civilization, or medicine. Almost 140 years after his birth, Dr. George N. Papanicolaou remains the first and only modern Greek physician honored by the Hellenic as well as the European Union monetary systems purely for his medical achievements and contribution in diagnostic cytopathology.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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Author Contributions

Ioannis N. Mammias and Demetrios A. Spandidos contributed equally to the conception and design of the manuscript, wrote the original draft, edited and critically revised the manuscript, and read and approved the final manuscript.

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